

# Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

## Another Domino Falling

- Standard: I. Culture  
II. Time, Continuity, and Change  
III. People, Places, and Environments  
IV. Individual Development and Institutions  
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions  
VIII. Science, Technology, and Society  
IX. Global Connections  
X. Civic Ideals and Practices
- Grade Level: 9–12 (game related to domino theory)
- Objectives: The student will:
- Demonstrate the meaning of “domino theory”
  - Use a 1950 map of Southeast Asia to determine what countries could be involved in the spread of communism
  - Create and challenge each other to a game of dominos based on domino theory
  - Explain verbally what aid Eisenhower is promising to Diem and why
- Time: 1 class period
- Materials: Documents: **1954** *U.S. Involvement in Vietnam Begins Quietly*
- Resources: *Dominos*  
*Map: Asia 1950*
- Materials: Scissors  
Access to laptops or computer lab
- <http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/vietnam/index-1945.html>  
<http://faculty.smu.edu/dsimon/Change-Viet.html>  
<http://www.pbs.org/battlefieldvietnam/timeline/index.html>  
<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Vietnam+A+television+history&view=detail&mid=1A90A064F61BE6AFA4401A90A064F61BE6AFA440&first=0&FORM=LKVR>  
(7-minute introduction to a TV series on Vietnam)
- Procedures:

*Setting the Stage*

The document for this lesson might be short, but it's packed with history and diplomacy—on both sides.

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the French controlled much of Indochina—modern-day Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos—but they lost control of the colony to the Japanese during World War II. When the French attempted to regain control after the war, they were opposed by Vietnamese nationalists under the control of Ho Chi Minh.

The French fought for nine years (1946—1954) and spent more than \$3 billion in American money. After a decisive French defeat, the 1954 Geneva Accords divided the country in two at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel: Ho Chi Minh would control the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north and one of France's Vietnamese allies, Ngo Dinh Diem, would control the Republic of South Vietnam.

Diem's goal was to make South Vietnam an anti-communist state and he wanted American help to do it. In this document, President Eisenhower gave Diem the backing he wanted.

Dwight Eisenhower was as interested as his predecessor, Harry Truman, in containing the spread of communism. In a news conference on April 7, 1954, Eisenhower (just after the French defeat) conceptualized the idea of global politics as a game of dominos:

"You might have the broader consideration that might follow what you would call the "falling domino" principle. You have a row of dominos set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly."

In this lesson, students will read the letter, understand the "hour of trial" and "play" with the dominos of the Far East.

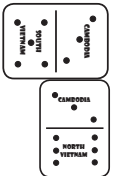
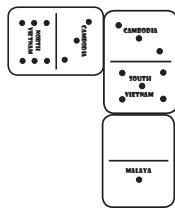
*Pre-Lesson:*

1. Print copies on card stock (one per student) of the Asian dominos.
2. Project or distribute copies of the resource, *Southeast Asia Map*, which shows French Indochina.
3. Write the paragraph below on the board (but hidden) or on a Power Point to be revealed later in the lesson.

*"You might have the broader consideration that might follow what you would call the 'falling domino' principle. You have a row of dominos set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you could have a beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences."*

*Lesson Day*

1. As the students arrive, give them a domino sheet, an envelope, and a pair of scissors.
2. Show the opening clip of *Vietnam: A Television Series* (seven minutes, listed above). While students are watching, they can cut out their Asian dominos and label them with their initials on the back of each domino. They should then put them in the envelope and write their name on the front.
3. Distribute the document and have students read it. While they are reading, collect the envelopes with the dominos inside.
4. Ask the students what kind of aid Eisenhower is offering to Diem and why? Someone should mention the "domino theory," if not the teacher will reveal the paragraph on the board or Power Point and discuss its meaning with the students.
5. Pair the envelopes at random to form domino teams and hand them back. Explain that they will work together to try to predict which nations will "fall" to communism, following these rules:



- a. One student will select a domino and place it on the desk between the two players. The other student will then try to match the name at one end of the first domino. The domino may be placed on any one of the three sides, but then no other match may be made on that domino.
  - b. Domino blanks (no name or dots) "stop" the spread of communism by stopping a match. Students may use them where ever they choose.
  - c. Continue playing until as many dominos as possible have been used.
  - d. Tally up the number of pairs. Which countries had the most pairs? Which countries were most likely to fall? Least likely?
  - e. Did other teams have similar results?
6. If time permits, allow them set their own rules and challenge each other. Were the results different? Have students keep note of the results. Is it possible to change the outcome? Could the outcome in southeast Asia have been different? What could have changed history?
  7. When all is done, put the right pieces back in the right envelopes and collect all envelopes. Save for another day and another round.
  8. Give students the web sites listed with this lesson to view for homework as the lessons of Vietnam interest students greatly. ■